

Three's A Crowd, by Colin Brake

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[Part One]

AUNTIE: This is Earth Colony Phoenix calling on all frequencies. Can anyone hear me? Please, we need urgent assistance. This is Earth Colony Phoenix, located on the fourth planet of the Paladies star system. Repeat, we need urgent assistance. End recording, computer. Continue broadcasting that on the current schedule. Rotate through the entire frequency spectrum. Huh, for what it's worth. There's no one out there, is there, Butler?

BUTLER: (a robot) Statistically there are billions upon billions of lifeforms in the cosmos, ma'am.

AUNTIE: Don't be so pedantic. You know what I mean.

BUTLER: It would appear to be the case that there are no other lifeforms in the range of our communication equipment.

AUNTIE: I keep hoping.

BUTLER: Your faith does you credit.

AUNTIE: Does it?

BUTLER: Latest data from Medusa shows that we are continuing to suffer from very high levels of sunspot activity. The radiation belts will be particularly dense today. Perhaps tomorrow...

AUNTIE: Tomorrow is another day, eh? Not for all of us, Butler. Not for all of us.

DOCTOR: You know, there's an art to the building up of dramatic tension. Sorry, old girl.

PERI: Do you mind? Less of the old.

DOCTOR: Ah, Peri. I er, I didn't see you there.

PERI: You do know that talking to yourself is the first sign of madness, don't you? So, what are you doing, giving the Tardis its 10,000 year oil change?

DOCTOR: Well, if you must know, I'm just trying to realign the temporal drift circuits. Somewhere along the line we've got a little out of phase. Happy now?

PERI: Totally.

DOCTOR: Well, you did ask. We'll be back to normal flight in no time.

PERI: Whatever that means on board a time ship.

DOCTOR: Look on the bright side, Peri. Be positive. Take advantage of having a little, what do you call it, personal time.

PERI: Personal time?

DOCTOR: Yes. Why don't you and Erimem take the chance to enjoy some good old-fashioned R&R. That's rest and relaxation. Just what the Doctor ordered. There's plenty to do around here if you want to enjoy yourselves. Why don't you go for a swim?

PERI: That might be a bit difficult. The pool's still frozen.

DOCTOR: Well, ice skating, then. I take it you were teaching Erimem how to skate.

PERI: Actually, Doctor, it was Erimem that I wanted to talk to you about. She's been a bit quiet lately.

DOCTOR: Ah, of course. Ever since...

PERI: Ever since Tibet, yes.

DOCTOR: I was worried this might happen. And has she spoken to you about what happened?

PERI: A little. I don't think she can face talking about it quite yet. It's a complicated area, girls and their fathers. Trust me.

DOCTOR: Oh, I do, Peri. It's one area of expertise I don't think I'm ever going to know much about. Poor Erimem. I know it must have been very hard for her, but she's young, she'll bounce back. I'm sure she'll be back to normal soon.

PERI: Just a matter of time, eh?

DOCTOR: You said you wanted to talk to me about her.

PERI: I was wondering. Well, actually I was wondering if you were regretting asking her to travel with us.

DOCTOR: Regret? Oh no, no. I've never been one for regrets.

PERI: I was worried you might prefer to have just one travelling companion. Two's company, and all that.

DOCTOR: No, no, no, not at all. I'm happy with this crew. Two companions suits me fine. The more the merrier, as I used to say to Adric and Nyssa. And er Tegan. Well, maybe not. You can have too much of a good thing, I suppose.

PERI: Are you sure about that?

DOCTOR: Of course I am. Look, why don't you go and try to find her. See how she is.

PERI: But how will I ever find her? She could be anywhere. And these corridors go on for ever.

(Running water. Ducks quacking.)

PERI: Erimem?

ERIMEM: I'm over here. Have we landed somewhere?

PERI: No, not yet. The Doctor's making some repairs or something.

ERIMEM: Is there something wrong with the Tardis?

PERI: When isn't there? Don't worry about it, I'm sure it's nothing.

ERIMEM: I'm not worried.

PERI: I didn't mean to suggest you were. Nice room you've found, if room's the right word. I couldn't believe it when I opened the door and stepped into this field.

ERIMEM: It's wonderful, isn't it? And it looks like it goes on for miles, but I'm sure it's just some kind of illusion.

PERI: A very good one, though. Is that some kind of road in the distance?

ERIMEM: It can't be, can it?

PERI: If you squint you can almost think you can see traffic, but that would be impossible.

ERIMEM: No, it's no good. I can't see anything moving.

PERI: Must be my eyes playing tricks on me.

ERIMEM: Or mine.

PERI: I'm sorry. That was thoughtless of me. How are your eyes?

ERIMEM: Better, most of the time. I'm a bit sensitive to bright light, but these, what did you call them?

Shades? These have helped a lot.

PERI: They suit you. Who knew the wardrobe rooms had anything so stylish in them. I'm glad you're getting over what happened on the mountainside. I was worried you might be thinking leaving us.

ERIMEM: I cannot lie to you, Peri. I have been thinking about that.

PERI: Erimem, no.

ERIMEM: It's true. I thought travelling with you and the Doctor would be exciting, an adventure in learning.

But all I seem to be learning about is myself, and I'm not sure I've liked the lessons I've learnt.

PERI: You mustn't let one bad experience colour your ideas about travelling with us. We've had fun in other places we've been to, haven't we?

ERIMEM: If you count nearly getting killed, and running away from men and beasts with weapons, and getting involved with danger at every turn as fun, I suppose.

PERI: It's not always like that.

ERIMEM: Isn't it?

PERI: No, it's not. I've not been travelling with the Doctor long, but already I've seen such fantastic things.

Sights I'll remember for the rest of my life. Don't give up on us now.

ERIMEM: (sighs) I used to be a queen, a god. I knew who I was and what I was for. But now, I just don't know any more.

PERI: Oh, come on. Don't get maudlin. You've been given an opportunity to travel all through Time and Space. A chance most people can only dream of. Embrace it, go with the flow.

ERIMEM: Go with the flow?

PERI: It means take life as it comes. Don't sweat the small stuff. Que sera sera. It's like a rollercoaster ride in the dark. You never know if you're about to go up or down, but you know it's going to be wild.

ERIMEM: I don't know what a rollercoaster is, but it doesn't sound much fun.

PERI: You have no idea. Next time we're on Earth in the twentieth century, you and me are going to check out some serious thrill rides.

ERIMEM: But when will that be?

PERI: I don't know why, but the Tardis always seems to be going back to Earth. I'll bet that's where we're going now. Probably England. You wait and see. Now, which direction is the door?

ERIMEM: You didn't close it behind you, did you? We'll never find it if you did.

PERI: Of course I didn't. At least I don't think I did. Now listen to me. I'm getting as bad as the Doctor. Come on, let's start looking.

COMPUTER: Communication channels to all cells now open. Begin broadcasting now.

AUNTIE: Thank you, computer. Citizens of Earth Colony Phoenix, this is the voice of Auntie. May I please have your full attention. Thank you. I am pleased to be able to bring you all good news. Our latest probes have detected a reduction in strength in the radiation field, which means we have the opportunity for some of you to return today. As you know, it is extremely dangerous to punch a transit signal through the interference of the radiation belt. Only the fittest of you can take that risk. The system computers have made an evaluation, and you will be informed of your own individual status shortly. For the last fifty long years, we have had to be both strong and patient. But even during our years of exile, many of our people have made it home, and soon, yes soon, we will all get there. To celebrate this latest return, I am happy to announce that today will be a Social. At 1800 hours, the internal teleport system will be on open access for three hours. As with all Socials, I advise you all to think carefully about who it is you wish to share this time with. Remember, social contact is a privilege. Choose your social partner with care, and enjoy the Social. This is the voice of Auntie, signing off.

COMPUTER: Communication channels now closed.

AUNTIE: Thank goodness.

(Door opens and closes.)

BUTLER: Have I missed your address, Auntie?

AUNTIE: Yes, it is done.

BUTLER: I am sorry I missed it. You are always so positive when you speak to the colonists. I find it very inspirational.

AUNTIE: I am an old hand, dear Butler, that's all. Lay it on thick for the masses, such as they are.

BUTLER: You do what you have to do. You have responsibilities.

AUNTIE: Don't I just.

BUTLER: Your decisions are always logical.

AUNTIE: Is that meant to make me feel better?

BUTLER: Logic is always a better foundation than emotion on which to base a decision.

AUNTIE: For you, maybe, but you were made that way. I am a human being, and we're not so good at dealing with things in such black and white terms. At least, we shouldn't be.

BUTLER: I am curious about one thing, though. I have scanned the list for today's return. You have not selected colonist 478.

AUNTIE: Bellip? I couldn't face... I want her with me.

BUTLER: I understand.

AUNTIE: Goodness, what's happened to us?

BUTLER: Since the colony was founded on this planet fifty years ago, the human population has declined

AUNTIE: Stop. Stop. That was a rhetorical question. I don't need a history lesson. I was there. You know, I remember the real Socials. Parties, get-togethers. People would meet together and talk, eat, drink, maybe even dance. I used to like to dance.

BUTLER: Would you like me to dance with you, ma'am? I have been programmed with a number of traditional human dance steps.

AUNTIE: It wouldn't be the same. Dance is what free humans do, not creatures who live lives in isolation like caged animals.

BUTLER: The colonists have chosen to live like this over the years. Perhaps they are happier this way.

AUNTIE: Happy? Do you really think these people are happy? Don't you know anything about humanity?

BUTLER: I know you lead this colony with wisdom and compassion, ma'am, and that you should not doubt yourself.

AUNTIE: You're programmed to agree with me. How can I trust your opinion about anything?

LAROQ: Right. Let's try this again. Hello, Bellip. It's me, Laroq. She can see that, idiot, if she's activated her video circuit. Okay, start again. Hi, Bellip. How are you? I was er, wondering if you'd had any thoughts about the Social today? Oh no, no, no. That's no good. What if she just says no to that. Where do you go from there, Laroq? Oh, this is hopeless. The more I rehearse this, the worse it gets. Computer.

COMPUTER: (unintelligible)

LAROQ: Open a communication channel to colonist 478 Bellip.

COMPUTER: Channel is open. Communication accepted. Audio channel opening. You may proceed.

BELLIP [OC]: Hello?

LAROQ: Bellip? It's me, Laroq. Please, activate your video circuits. I'd like to see you.

BELLIP [OC]: I, I'd prefer not. Please don't be offended.

LAROQ: Nothing you can do can offend me, Bellip. Are you well?

BELLIP [OC]: I've been a little ill, but I'm better now. And you?

LAROQ: I'm good. I'm really good. My regime has been going well.

BELLIP [OC]: I'm pleased to hear it.

LAROQ: I was wondering. Auntie has announced that there is to be a Social tonight.

BELLIP [OC]: I know. I heard Auntie myself.

LAROQ: Have you chosen a Social partner?

BELLIP [OC]: Oh, I don't think I'll be taking part.

LAROQ: But Bellip, you should. It is good to see people, face to face, sometimes, isn't it?

BELLIP [OC]: Maybe. But it's like I said, I've been ill. I need my own space.

LAROQ: I am sorry. I didn't realise. But I don't have to invade your space. I could just port in and stay on the transmat pad, just to see you.

BELLIP [OC]: No. I'm sorry, not this time.

LAROQ: Does that mean perhaps next Social?

BELLIP [OC]: Ye-es, perhaps. That might be very nice. I do like you, Laroq.

LAROQ: And I like you. That's why I was looking forward to seeing you, face to face.

BELLIP [OC]: Don't waste the Social on my behalf, though. Why not meet up with Vidler?

LAROQ: Why would I want to spend even a minute of contact time with him?

BELLIP [OC]: I thought he was your friend. You speak for hours on the channels, don't you? Why not talk

face to face for a while?

LAROQ: He'll just go on about his conspiracy theories, as usual, especially if we're in the same room, not on the public net. I'd rather see you.

BELLIP [OC]: I'm sorry, Laroq, but I'm just not up to it this month. Be patient with me, please?

LAROQ: Whatever you want. Of course.

ERIMEM: I still don't understand. I walked for a long time before finding that place, but it's taken no time to get back here.

PERI: That's the Tardis for you. Go with the flow, remember?

ERIMEM: I'll try.

PERI: We're landing?

DOCTOR: Ah, there you both are. Jolly good. What was the question?

ERIMEM: Peri asked if we were landing.

DOCTOR: Yes, yes. I need to come out of the Vortex into real Space-Time to allow the adjustments I've been making to calibrate themselves.

ERIMEM: And is it Earth?

DOCTOR: We don't always land on Earth, you know.

PERI: (laughing) Just most of the time.

DOCTOR: Right, let's have a look where we are, shall we?

ERIMEM: What will you give me if it isn't Earth?

PERI: Are you serious?

ERIMEM: I thought you were confident.

PERI: Okay then. A pedicure if I'm wrong.

DOCTOR: I hope you know I heard all that. You have a witness to your wager, Erimem.

ERIMEM: So what's the answer, Doctor? Am I going to get this pedicure?

(Scanner.)

DOCTOR: Oh dear.

PERI: No.

DOCTOR: I don't think that looks like Earth, does it?

ERIMEM: What is that thing?

PERI: A space station. Looks a bit dead.

DOCTOR: Does seem a bit dark, doesn't it. Shall we take a closer look? I really do think I'm getting better at these short hops. Textbook landing. No complaints I trust, ladies?

PERI: You want a spontaneous round of applause?

DOCTOR: You can save that for the next time you're watching me bat.

PERI: Let's hope that won't be for a while. At least baseball only takes hours, not days.

ERIMEM: Baseball?

PERI: Don't ask.

DOCTOR: No more signs of life inside than there was out, but life support is active. It'll be safe to explore.

ERIMEM: But is there anything to see out there, except dust?

DOCTOR: We'll never know if we don't look. Coming?

PERI: Beats sitting around here, I guess.

DOCTOR: That's the spirit, Peri. Always have an enquiring mind.

(Tardis doors open.)

ERIMEM: Peri.

PERI: Yes?

ERIMEM: What is a pedicure?

(Tardis door closed. Walking on metal.)

PERI: Spooky.

ERIMEM: Do you think it's haunted?

PERI: No. You need a creaky old mansion and cobwebs for that.

DOCTOR: Over here, you two. Take a look at this.

PERI: All these screens. What is it, Mission Control?

DOCTOR: Of a kind. This is the operational centre of the station, and these are observation screens.

PERI: Observing what?

DOCTOR: The station is in geostationary orbit around planet, and the sensors and cameras are all trained on that landmass there.

PERI: Some kind of settlement?

DOCTOR: Those are habitat domes. Looking at this technology, I'd say human, around 28th, maybe 29th century.

PERI: So what's this place, some kind of automated watch tower?

DOCTOR: It would appear so.

PERI: I wish we could see it for real, not just on a screen.

DOCTOR: I expect there'll be some sort of porthole around here somewhere, but be careful.

(Erimem screams in the distance.)

DOCTOR: Erimem!

PERI: She wandered over that way.

DOCTOR: Erimem, what happened?

ERIMEM: It's my eyes. I found the window and was watching the planet. It was so beautiful, so peaceful, and then suddenly...

DOCTOR: The sun rose and blinded you.

ERIMEM: It's okay, it was just a shock. And my eyes are still sensitive. I'm sorry if I worried you.

DOCTOR: Let me take a look.

ERIMEM: I'm sure I'll be fine.

PERI: So, what's the verdict?

DOCTOR: I don't think there's any permanent damage, Erimem, but you might think about keeping these sunglasses on your nose rather than in your hair.

PERI: Why don't we find somewhere to sit down, let your eyes recover a little.

DOCTOR: If you don't mind, I'll carry on taking a look at what you called Mission Control. See what I can find out from the computer systems. I'm surprised there's so little sign of life here.

PERI: Well, if there was anything here, I think we'd have seen them by now. We've not exactly been creeping about like mice.

DOCTOR: No, no, I'm sure that there's no one else up here.

PERI: Now I am worried.

DOCTOR: Thanks for the vote of confidence.

ERIMEM: What about on the planet? Are there people there?

DOCTOR: Those habitat domes suggest it's a possibility. I'll try to find out.

PERI: Come on, Erimem, let's leave him to work. That way looks likely.

ERIMEM: Where's the door handle then?

PERI: Some kind of sliding door. Maybe it's stiff or something. I think it's just stuck.

ERIMEM: Don't hurt yourself.

PERI: Oh, don't worry about me. Stubborn is my middle name (effort) and once I've decided to do something, I

(Door creaks open.)

PERI: I tend to do it. There.

ERIMEM: Well done.

(Alarm sounds.)

ERIMEM: Oh no.

PERI: Maybe there's a reason the door didn't want to open.

DOCTOR: Don't panic. Just a motion sensor.

ERIMEM: Can you make it stop?

DOCTOR: I should think so. Let's have a look at that panel.

(Alarm stops.)

PERI: Is that you?

DOCTOR: No. It just switched itself off. Nothing to worry about, I'm sure.

ERIMEM: But the alarm?

DOCTOR: Like I said, it just went off when the door opened. Nothing else has happened, has it? No bulkheads locking into place, no robot guards scrambling to the scene. Nothing at all. The fact of the matter is there's no one else here to react to the alarm, is there.

PERI: I guess so.

(Alarm.)

AUNTIE: That's the space station, isn't it?

BUTLER: I'm afraid so, ma'am.

AUNTIE: Is it a fault? Some kind of surge in the circuits?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. It is more serious than that. It would appear there is activity on board the space station. At least three lifeforms.

AUNTIE: It can't be. Not yet. It's too soon. We're not ready.

BUTLER: It is possible that the lifeforms are harmless.

AUNTIE: Harmless? What kind of creature is going to be casually travelling round here? No, I don't like this. I don't like this at all.

BUTLER: Would you like me to investigate?

AUNTIE: Yes. Port up there immediately.

BUTLER: As you wish, ma'am. Activate medium range transmat system, location Space Station Medusa.

COMPUTER: Medium range transmat. Contact made.

BUTLER: Activate.

AUNTIE: Arm your weapons, Butler. Be prepared.

ERIMEM: Peri, we've come a long way inside the station. I know I wanted it dark but isn't this a bit much?

PERI: And quiet. I wonder what this area was used for?

ERIMEM: It seems even more abandoned than the control room.

PERI: I wonder why that alarm went off? Perhaps it's a quarantine area.

ERIMEM: The Doctor wouldn't have let us wander off if there was any danger. At least, I don't think he would.

PERI: I think this might be a generator room. Where the station's power comes from.

ERIMEM: What are those shapes piled up over there?

PERI: I don't know. Could they be eggs?

ERIMEM: If those are eggs, I wouldn't want to see the chicken that laid them. They're huge!

PERI: They *are* eggs, I'm sure of it. How many are there?

ERIMEM: Dozens. No, more than that. Look, they go back further. Piles and piles of them.

PERI: Let me get a closer look.

ERIMEM: Are you sure? It might be dangerous.

PERI: They're just eggs. They're not going to start hatching just because I touch them, are they? I just want to see if they're alive.

ERIMEM: Be careful.

(Treadmill whirring, breathless.)

LAROQ: How much longer?

COMPUTER: (mostly unintelligible) Sixteen minutes of cardiovascular exercise.

LAROQ: I can't run any more. Stop the treadmill. (gasping) Thank you. (beep) Bellip, is that you? Did you change your mind? Oh, it's you.

VIDLER: Who else was it going to be? Still doing your exercises. You obedient little lab rat.

LAROQ: I was bored.

VIDLER: You're playing into their hands. You been avoiding the food?

LAROQ: Yes, Vidler, I have, and I'm starving. Are you sure it's necessary?

VIDLER: Of course it is. Don't you feel the difference?

LAROQ: I feel hungry.

VIDLER: Hungry but alert. I tell you, the food is stuffed with drugs to keep us docile.

LAROQ: Just a minute. The Social's not due to start yet. How did you manage to port in here?

VIDLER: You see? You're thinking for yourself now.

LAROQ: But how?

VIDLER: Maybe I'm just smarter than the system computer.

LAROQ: What's that meant to mean? Have you been hacking into central systems again?

VIDLER: Auntie never did prove that.

LAROQ: Vidler, you can't keep breaking the rules!

VIDLER: Whyever not? If the rules are stupid, they deserve to be broken.

LAROQ: So you've hacked the transmat controls.

VIDLER: No, of course not. The system is always open, but most of the sheep in this colony are too timid to try and use the ports any other time.

LAROQ: People are happy in their personal space.

VIDLER: People don't know what happy is.

LAROQ: And you're going to change that, are you?

VIDLER: We are. You are still with us, Laroq?

LAROQ: You know I think we should have more freedom.

VIDLER: And this is the way to get it.

LAROQ: How?

VIDLER: By organising. That's why I wanted us to avoid eating the drugged food. We're having a mass meet.

LAROQ: A what?

VIDLER: I want to get us all together, all the people I've been talking to for months. Think of it. It will be historic. The first political rally ever in the history of this planet.

LAROQ: How, how many?

VIDLER: How many what?

LAROQ: How many people?

VIDLER: I don't know. Five, six? Maybe even eight people.

LAROQ: (panicking) In the same place? In one room?

VIDLER: Imagine it.

LAROQ: I am! Excuse me. I need some space.

(Door opens and closes.)

VIDLER: It's nothing to be scared of, Laroq. It's natural and it's the future!

COMPUTER: Colonist Bellip Auntie wishes to speak to you one to one.

BELLIP: To me? Okay, accept call.

AUNTIE [OC]: Colonist Bellip, are you well?

BELLIP: Auntie?

AUNTIE [OC]: Have you recovered from your illness?

BELLIP: Oh yes, I'm much better now. Much better. In fact, I've never been fitter. Are you calling me for any particular reason?

AUNTIE [OC]: You mean, have I news of the Return selection?

BELLIP: Yes. Have I made it? Am I going home?

AUNTIE [OC]: I'm sorry, Bellip.

BELLIP: But why? I've been eating full rations, completing and exceeding my exercise targets, even when I was ill.

AUNTIE [OC]: I know. And you are stronger than at your last evaluation, but not strong enough. It'll be too great a risk for you to try a Return today.

BELLIP: But I want to go home. I can't bear this.

AUNTIE [OC]: You will return, I promise.

BELLIP: But you could change your mind, couldn't you?

AUNTIE [OC]: No. The decision has been made. You will just have to be patient. I am sorry.

PERI: Nothing's happening. Just eggs.

ERIMEM: Peri, what do you think this is?

PERI: Hmm? Oh, no idea.

ERIMEM: It's just big enough for me to stand on.

PERI: Careful, you might set something off.

ERIMEM [OC]: Peri!

PERI: Hold on.

ERIMEM [OC]: I can't get out of here. The door's stuck. I'm trapped.

COMPUTER: The colony was settled in the year 2835, fifty standard years ago.

DOCTOR: Not bad, Doctor. Not bad. Computer, tell me, how many colonists are currently living on the planet?

COMPUTER: Current figures are being collated. Please stand by.

BUTLER: Please stand away from the computers and make yourself known.

DOCTOR: Ah. Company at last. I thought it wouldn't be long.

BUTLER: Please move away as requested.

DOCTOR: Shall I raise my arms and come quietly?

BUTLER: That would be appreciated.

DOCTOR: Do you have a name or number? I'm the Doctor.

BUTLER: Doctor?

DOCTOR: Just the Doctor. And you're?

BUTLER: I am designated Butler. Just Butler. No definite article.

DOCTOR: And are you in charge round here?

BUTLER: I am at the service of Auntie. She is the leader of the Earth Colony Phoenix.

DOCTOR: A leader called Auntie, eh? How cosy. I don't suppose you were thinking of taking me to see this Auntie or are you going to throw me into some kind of tedious cell first?

PERI: It's okay, Erimem, just stay calm. We got that sliding door open earlier, we can do this too.

ERIMEM [OC]: Quickly, please. I don't like this.

PERI: Hang on. Must be a way to get it open again.

ERIMEM [OC]: Peri, this isn't very pleasant. Hurry.

PERI: There's some kind of control panel here, but there are no labels or markings.

ERIMEM [OC]: Try anything! Please, I don't like this. I feel like I'm trapped in a sarcophagus.

PERI: Okay, okay. Don't panic. Look, watch me through the window. I'm still here. Let's see.

(Tries various buttons.)

ERIMEM [OC]: Peri!

PERI: Erimem!

DOCTOR: Peri, where's Erimem? What's happening?

PERI: She was just in there. But she disappeared in front of my eyes. She just melted away!

DOCTOR: It's some kind of transmat device. Am I right, Butler?

BUTLER: You are correct, Butler. It is a transmat. This is the station power plant, but the transmat here is connected to the general colony systems.

PERI: Who's your metal friend?
DOCTOR: This is Butler, and technically we're his prisoners.
PERI: Oh, terrific.
DOCTOR: But we can deal with all that later. The priority is locating Erimem. Can you trace the port to a destination, Butler?
BUTLER: I am afraid that might not be possible.
PERI: Might not? What do you mean, might not?
BUTLER: The directional controls were scrambled when you attempted to open the transmat pod.
DOCTOR: So it was a random port?
BUTLER: Your friend may have been sent to any one of a thousand port addresses in the colony.
PERI: You still said may. What else may have happened?
BUTLER: If the random coordinates do not relate to an actual port, your friend will never arrive anywhere.
DOCTOR: So she should reappear back here.
BUTLER: No, Doctor. Her atoms will be scattered in space. I fear your friend might already be dead.

[Part Two]

BUTLER: There is little we can do from here. Please accompany me to the group teleport terminal, to travel to the surface.
PERI: But what about Erimem?
DOCTOR: If I understand this port system correctly, Erimem's almost certainly already on the surface of the planet, so following her is probably the optimum course of action right now.
PERI: Almost certainly. So you're not sure?
DOCTOR: Now don't go getting all upset. It really won't help.
PERI: Doctor, we can't keep losing Erimem like this everywhere we go! I can't deal with it!
DOCTOR: I know, Peri, but the best thing we can do is to be positive. Let's go with Butler here and see what happens. I'm sure we'll find Erimem soon enough, alive and well.

LAROQ: The port's activating. How can it?
VIDLER: I don't know, but it is.
ERIMEM: What a strange sensation.
VIDLER: It's a girl.
LAROQ: Bellip, is that you? You changed your mind after all.
ERIMEM: Where am I? How did I get here? Where's Peri?
VIDLER: You just ported here. Don't you know what you're doing?
ERIMEM: I was on a space station. Something happened.
VIDLER: Space station? You've been on Medusa?
LAROQ: Now, Vidler, save it.
VIDLER: But if she's ported down from Medusa...
LAROQ: (panicking) I'm not interested. She's here. In my space! With me and you!
VIDLER: Oh, right. Don't freak out, Laroq.
LAROQ: But there are three people in this room!
ERIMEM: I'm sorry, is there a problem?
LAROQ: Too many people. I can't cope.
VIDLER: Get a grip.
ERIMEM: I'm sorry, what's the matter with him? I don't understand.
VIDLER: Big brave Laroq here has never been in the physical presence of more than one other human being in his entire life. For us, this is a crowded room.

DOCTOR: Very efficient transmat system, Butler. I hardly felt a thing.
PERI: Speak for yourself. Think I left my stomach on the space station.
BUTLER: The colony relies on the transmat system for all travel.
DOCTOR: I thought as much. I imagine that's the purpose of the space station. Docking facilities up there, then beam down here.
PERI: Is this someone's home? Looks like a small apartment. Bed, gym equipment, kitchenette, living area.
BUTLER: This is a standard habitat cell, currently unoccupied.
DOCTOR: Really. Do you have a falling population?
BUTLER: I am sure Auntie will be able to answer all your questions.
DOCTOR: I do hope so.
BUTLER: I shall take you to see her now, Doctor, but your companion will have to wait here.
PERI: No way. Doctor, I don't want to be kept out of the loop.
DOCTOR: It's all right, Peri. I'm sure you won't miss anything. Just wait here, and keep your ears and eyes open. I'll be back soon.

BUTLER: Ready, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Whenever you are. Don't go anywhere, Peri. (transmats)

PERI: Where am I going to go? It's a room with no doors.

VIDLER: That's it, calm down. Breathe deep and hold, and then exhale.

ERIMEM: Is he all right?

VIDLER: Just a panic attack. He'll be fine. But if you wouldn't mind staying over there, in the port.

ERIMEM: Of course, if it will help.

LAROQ: I think I'm okay now. It's just a shock.

ERIMEM: I still can't believe what you've said. You've really never had more than one other person in this room before?

LAROQ: Never.

ERIMEM: But why? Are you some kind of special person? A king or god or something?

VIDLER: A god, him? You've got to be kidding. You don't meet living gods, do you?

ERIMEM: You'd be surprised.

VIDLER: As a matter of fact, we don't meet anyone at all if we can help it. We live lives of (ahem) splendid isolation.

ERIMEM: I don't understand. Why?

VIDLER: Because we do.

LAROQ: It's the way life on this colony has evolved. It's a necessity of our unfortunate position. We have to focus on preparing to return home.

VIDLER: This colony is a failure, a disaster.

LAROQ: The bottom line is, it's just not viable. We are the last generation to be born here.

ERIMEM: I still don't understand. How can you have any kind of relationship with anyone if you never meet?

VIDLER: Everything is done by the intercom, usually with the video cameras deactivated.

ERIMEM: You don't even see each other's faces?

LAROQ: We have become shy.

VIDLER: He means feeble, weak.

LAROQ: We have to focus on the Return.

VIDLER: How many times do I have to tell you, it's a con, a trick.

LAROQ: It's not a trick. I know it's not. Garma has gone, Herol, Magri. They achieved Return status and they went home.

VIDLER: Perhaps.

ERIMEM: Why is it so hard for you to go home? Do you not have spaceships?

VIDLER: No. This is a very hostile star system, full of meteorites and planetoids, far from the major space lanes, so we're dependent on transmat technology. Like the local ports you've just travelled in.

ERIMEM: I think I prefer doors, and horses, and chariots.

LAROQ: What are horses?

ERIMEM: Er, never mind. I still don't follow why you two haven't used these transmats to go home.

VIDLER: We have to achieve a certain level of physical fitness to make the journey.

LAROQ: We have a strict routine of diet and exercise to build up the necessary strength in our bodies. That's why we live in isolation. We cannot allow anything to cloud our focus.

ERIMEM: And when you have reached that level, what happens then?

LAROQ: We are tested and then called. Those who are awarded Return status port up to the space station and are placed in stasis. Then they are beamed home.

VIDLER: And they are never heard of again.

BUTLER: Ma'am, this is the alien whose craft landed on the space station. He's called the Doctor.

AUNTIE: And why are you here, Doctor? We're a long way from the general space lanes here.

DOCTOR: My friends and I are travellers.

AUNTIE: Friends?

DOCTOR: I travel with two companions, but I'm afraid my spacecraft navigation systems are a little erratic. We don't always end up where we want to.

AUNTIE: That makes sense. No one in his or her right mind comes here willingly. This is a dead-end world in a cul-de-sac star cluster.

DOCTOR: An odd choice of location for a colony, if you don't mind my saying.

AUNTIE: The founders wanted independence. They didn't want Federation officials keeping an eye on them.

DOCTOR: Having occasional contact with your home system is one thing. Having none at all is something else. And you don't have any contact, do you.

AUNTIE: Not as such. There is a relay system for long-distance transmats, but it's become unreliable, like everything around here.

DOCTOR: The colony is failing.

AUNTIE: The planet wasn't entirely suitable for habitation when we landed. The terraforming process has

been delayed more than we expected. The development of the new ozone level has taken longer than planned.

DOCTOR: But the project will produce results in the end?

AUNTIE: But we don't have time, Doctor. You were right, the colony is failing. It's ironic. The terraforming is nearly complete, but I fear we've run out of time.

DOCTOR: I am sorry.

AUNTIE: So am I. It's been a difficult existence since the Retreat. We've become insular, withdrawn from each other as much as from the rest of the Federation. We've forgotten what it is to be human.

BUTLER: You have done what you had to do, madam. You have survived.

AUNTIE: But at what cost? Any animal will take cover from inclement weather, but when the rain subsides, they have to emerge and get on with living. But us? We're still cringing in our caves.

DOCTOR: I'd like to see if I can help you. Perhaps I can look at ways to strengthen that long-distance transit system of yours.

AUNTIE: That would be kind.

DOCTOR: But first I need help to locate my missing companion.

AUNTIE: You've lost one of your crew?

BUTLER: One of the Doctor's aides was accidentally ported from the Medusa power room. I left the other in an empty habitat cell.

AUNTIE: If she's beamed to this site, the computer can probably locate her. Computer. Initiate a search for the Doctor's companion on board the colony ship.

DOCTOR: Thank you. But what if she's beamed to one of the other domes?

BUTLER: That is impossible, Doctor. The other domes house...

AUNTIE: That's enough, Butler. Please check on the Doctor's companion that he has not mislaid, will you? See that she has access to food and drink.

BUTLER: Of course, ma'am. (transmits)

DOCTOR: A very loyal droid you have there, Auntie.

AUNTIE: Without Butler, and the other servitors, I don't know how we would have survived this long. Now then, Doctor. Let's see what our computers can do for you.

PERI: Ah, there you are. How long am I going to have to wait here? And where's the Doctor?

BUTLER: I have been asked to make sure you have access to refreshments.

PERI: That'd be nice. I'm starving. But do you think you could answer my questions?

BUTLER: I cannot tell you how long you will have to wait. Auntie is assisting the Doctor to locate your missing friend.

PERI: Erimem's alive?

BUTLER: As yet we cannot be sure.

PERI: Terrific. So I just have to kick my heels after all, I guess.

BUTLER: Such activity will result in bruising, Miss Peri.

PERI: Was that meant to be a joke?

BUTLER: I am not programmed for humour.

PERI: My mum had the same problem. So, where are all the people on this planet?

BUTLER: What people are you referring to?

PERI: When we were in space, there looked like about a dozen domes down here. There must be thousand and thousands of people running about, so, where's the action? Do you have shops?

BUTLER: You have made a false assumption, Miss Peri. The colony is not as large as it appears. The number of colonists active on the planet at the moment is tiny.

PERI: Couple of hundred?

BUTLER: Sixteen.

PERI: Sixteen hundred?

BUTLER: Sixteen individuals.

ERIMEM: I cannot believe that you are happy to live this way.

VIDLER: Listen to her, Laroq. She's talking sense.

LAROQ: She's as mad as you are, you mean.

ERIMEM: But can't you see that this isn't natural? You're human beings. We're social creatures, not hermits.

VIDLER: We can't move around except by port, and the computer monitors our every movement.

ERIMEM: There must be another way out of this room.

LAROQ: Can you see one?

ERIMEM: There is only the one door.

VIDLER: To the bathroom. No exit through there.

ERIMEM: There must be something. When my people built the pyramids, the engineers constructed hidden doors and passages. It looked as if the resting places of the Pharaohs had no exits, but it was an illusion.

VIDLER: You think there might be a hidden exit to one of these cells?

ERIMEM: Have you ever looked for one?
VIDLER: No, I've never thought... Come on, Laroq, and check that wall.
ERIMEM: Tap the walls and listen. Here. This sounds hollow. Do you not agree?
VIDLER: It does sound different.
ERIMEM: Help me move this furniture.
LAROQ: Hey, be careful.
VIDLER: If you tried helping rather than moaning, you might prevent it getting damaged.
LAROQ: Okay, okay.
ERIMEM: A little further. All right. Ah, look.
VIDLER: Incredible!
LAROQ: What is it?
ERIMEM: What are you, children? That is a door.

(Sound of crying.)

PERI: Hello? Who's there? Where's it coming from? Over here. Hello? Can you hear me?
BELLIP [OC]: Who is that?
PERI: My name's Peri. And you?
BELLIP [OC]: I'm Bellip.
PERI: Are you a prisoner too, Bellip?
BELLIP [OC]: A prisoner?
PERI: Well, trapped, like I am. There's no door in here.
BELLIP [OC]: There's the port.
PERI: I don't know how to use it.
BELLIP [OC]: It's a port. You just dial a destination code and hit the activation control.
PERI: I don't know any destination codes.
BELLIP [OC]: You don't?
PERI: What's your code?
BELLIP [OC]: 478.
PERI: Right. Here goes nothing.

DOCTOR: Nothing yet from your computer?
AUNTIE: I'm sorry, Doctor. You'll have to forgive us. Our technology is not all it should be.
DOCTOR: Perhaps I can take a look at your systems for you. I have some experience with advanced computers.
AUNTIE: That won't be necessary.
DOCTOR: In that case, maybe I should check in on Peri. If you can just point me in the right direction?
BUTLER: Allow me, Doctor.
DOCTOR: Ah, Butler. I didn't notice you were back. How is Peri?
BUTLER: I left her some refreshments. Would you care to join her?
DOCTOR: Please.
BUTLER: Step onto the transmat and I will operate it for you. Ready?
DOCTOR: Whenever you are. (transmat)
AUNTIE: The Doctor asks too many questions.
BUTLER: He is an unknown factor, ma'am. He might make things difficult for you.
AUNTIE: I know. Why did he have to arrive now? I can't believe it's a coincidence.
BUTLER: You think he is an agent for another party?
AUNTIE: I don't know. I just know he's a complication I could do without.

PERI: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to freak you out.
BELLIP: (hyperventilating) It's not your fault. I'm not good with seeing people.
PERI: You live here alone?
BELLIP: We all live alone. That's how we are.
PERI: Don't you have friends?
BELLIP: Not really. There are people I speak to on the channels, and then there's Laroq.
PERI: Who is Laroq?
BELLIP: A boy I speak to. I want to see him, but I can't.
PERI: Can't?
BELLIP: I can't cope with being in the same room as someone else. It makes me feel ill.
PERI: Wow. And I thought my teenage angst years were bad.
BELLIP: Who are you, Peri? Where have you come from?
PERI: I'm a traveller. I come from a world where humans live with each other, sometimes in great numbers. And believe me, it is possible.
BELLIP: It sounds horrible.

PERI: It's not so bad. Look, can I get off this pad? I'll keep my distance, I promise you.

BELLIP: Okay.

PERI: Breathe deeply. Slowly.

BELLIP: Right.

PERI: Don't panic. That's it. Okay so far?

BELLIP: Yes, I, I think so.

PERI: Why don't I sit over here. Not too close, is it?

BELLIP: No. It's okay.

PERI: Right then. Well, this is nice, isn't it?

BELLIP: I, I suppose.

VIDLER: Maybe you were mistaken. It can't be a door.

ERIMEM: Of course it is.

VIDLER: Then why can't we open it?

ERIMEM: It must be locked somehow.

LAROQ: Because we're not meant to use it.

ERIMEM: Find something to hit it with.

VIDLER: One of the exercise weights.

LAROQ: Hey, don't damage them.

ERIMEM: It's the door we want to damage, not the weights. Try here, where the gap is.

VIDLER: It moved.

ERIMEM: Again.

VIDLER: I think I can get my hand in the gap.

ERIMEM: Pull it. It's opening! It was just stuck.

LAROQ: Where does it lead?

ERIMEM: A corridor.

LAROQ: What?

ERIMEM: A passageway, with lots more of these doors leading off.

LAROQ: It's like a room with no end.

ERIMEM: I wonder where it leads?

PERI: I can't believe you've never seen the sky.

BELLIP: I've hardly ever been outside this room in my entire life.

PERI: But that's so sad.

BELLIP: That's all I've ever known. What is it like, outside?

PERI: I don't know where to start. It's just open. You can feel the wind on your face, see for miles.

BELLIP: Sounds frightening.

PERI: But it's not. It's just what you're used to, I guess.

BELLIP: I don't think I'd like it.

PERI: You shouldn't knock it until you've tried it. Living like this, locked up inside this room, it can't be much fun.

BELLIP: I'm happy like this.

PERI: Are you? Really?

BELLIP: Yes.

PERI: But you were interested in this boy Laroq.

BELLIP: He has a gentle voice.

PERI: And you would like to hear it more?

BELLIP: Yes.

PERI: You'd like to spend more time talking to him, maybe some time *with* him?

BELLIP: Yes.

PERI: So, you *do* want more. The desire is there inside. You've just been brainwashed into thinking this is normal. Who's responsible for all this? Auntie?

BELLIP: Auntie is our leader. She looks after us.

PERI: By shutting you up in cages?

BELLIP: We have to be strong. We have to grow, eat our supplements, build up our body mass. We have to be fit to make the journey home.

PERI: Even athletes in training get breaks. Haven't you heard of life – work balance?

BELLIP: Thank you for visiting, Peri, but I think I'd like to be alone now.

PERI: You want me to go, just like that?

BELLIP: I need to be alone.

PERI: What you need is to get out of here and get a life.

BELLIP: Please.

PERI: Okay, okay, I'm going.

BELLIP: Just hit the blue return switch and you'll go directly back to the habitat cell you came from.
PERI: This isn't natural, Bellip. I think you should meet the Doctor. He'll know what to do about all this. He can help you, I'm sure. (transmat)
BELLIP: I'm sorry, Peri. I need my space.

DOCTOR: Ah, there you are, Peri. I was beginning to get worried.
PERI: I heard crying from the cell next door.
DOCTOR: And you managed to teleport in to investigate?
PERI: It was as easy as stepping through a door.
DOCTOR: That's just the problem with teleport systems. Instantaneous travel between different places is too easy. Makes people lazy.
PERI: And it seems to make them passive as well. Bellip told me she's hardly ever left her room in her entire life.
DOCTOR: That doesn't sound healthy, does it?
PERI: It's just weird, if you ask me. I don't like it, Doctor. It's like some kind of lunatic asylum. What's going on here?
DOCTOR: I don't know yet, but you're right, something is very wrong here.
PERI: Doctor, on the space station, Erimem and I found a load of eggs.
DOCTOR: What kind of eggs?
PERI: Big ones, about a foot wide. There were hundreds of them in what I think was the station's generator room.
DOCTOR: Something else that sounds like it warrants investigation.
PERI: So, where do we start?
DOCTOR: We start by avoiding the teleports.
PERI: Well, that won't get us a long way. There aren't any doors, or hadn't you noticed?
DOCTOR: Where there's a will, Peri. Now then, let's check these walls. If I'm right, and I usually am, this should be the right place to look. Ah!
PERI: Steady on, Doctor. No need to wreck the joint.
DOCTOR: Just a little redecoration. Didn't you think it odd to hang a rug on the wall like that?
PERI: I thought it was a quirk of interior design.
DOCTOR: Whereas it was actually hiding a door. There had to be one.
PERI: Can you open it?
DOCTOR: It's a bit stiff but... there you are. Ladies first.
PERI: Oh, thanks.

GENERAL: Why am I awake? Is it time?
QUEEN: It is my time.
GENERAL: Your Majesty, I am, as ever, your servant.
QUEEN: I have laid my last egg. My death will come soon.
GENERAL: No, your Majesty, please.
QUEEN: Be silent, General. I have little time. You and your guardsmen must complete your task and protect the brood.
GENERAL: With our lives.
QUEEN: I expect no less. The future of the Khellian race depends on it.
GENERAL: My men and I have been hibernating for some time. We will need nourishment.
QUEEN: Feast as you require, but do not risk the safety of the brood. The future must be protected.

PERI: A corridor. Well, this is a surprise.
DOCTOR: Come on, Peri, use your powers of observation. What do you see?
PERI: I told you, I see a corridor.
DOCTOR: And?
PERI: Doors like the ones we've just come through.
DOCTOR: What else?
PERI: The wall's a slight curve and the corridor has a slight bend to it.
DOCTOR: Reminiscent of?
PERI: I don't know. It could be a... Oh, you think this is a spaceship.
DOCTOR: I'm beginning to suspect this is the original colony ship, lying on the planet. I wonder why they're not using the domes?
PERI: This must be the door that leads to Bellip's room. It's numbered 478, the same as her transmat destination code.
DOCTOR: That simplifies things.
PERI: Can we open this door from this side?

DOCTOR: I think so. Can you remember what was on the other side of her room?
PERI: Another one of those depressing rugs, I think.
(Scrape.)
PERI: Bellip? That's better. Bellip?
DOCTOR: No one home?
PERI: She's gone. I wonder where?
DOCTOR: You must have scared her witless with your tales of the outside.
PERI: I was trying to help.
DOCTOR: She may still need your help.
PERI: Why don't I follow her? If I understand this thing correctly, I can just port to wherever it is she's just travelled to.
DOCTOR: And I'll pop back to the space station. Maybe I'll be able to track her from there. I wouldn't mind having a look at those eggs of yours either.
PERI: Doctor, do you think we're in danger here?
DOCTOR: I don't know what to think yet, but to be on the safe side, don't trust anyone.
PERI: Okay. If you say so.

VIDLER: It goes on and on. This is amazing!
LAROQ: It might be for you. It's making my head hurt.
ERIMEM: If it becomes too much, look down at your feet as you walk.
LAROQ: Thank you. I'll try that.
ERIMEM: What are the numbers on these doors?
VIDLER: Looks like they're room numbers. And they seem to match the port codes we use.
LAROQ: 243. Wasn't that Raqir's code?
VIDLER: Yeah. This must be his habitat cell.
ERIMEM: Who is Raqir?
LAROQ: One of Vidler's rebels.
VIDLER: One of the first. Or at least, he was. We haven't heard from him for weeks, and his port code has been closed down.
LAROQ: Maybe he's been ill or something.
ERIMEM: Are you worried about him?
VIDLER: Of course.
ERIMEM: Then we should investigate. I'm sure we can get this door open.
(Scraping.)
LAROQ: Oh, it stinks in here.
ERIMEM: Stale air.
VIDLER: Raqir? Are you in here?
LAROQ: No sign of him. But look at this place. No one's been in here for weeks.
VIDLER: I wonder where he went?
LAROQ: He wasn't due to make the Return, was he?
VIDLER: He never said.
LAROQ: The last pod destination is still in the memory chip. We could see where his last journey took him.
VIDLER: One of us...
LAROQ: He was your ally.
VIDLER: I don't know.
ERIMEM: Are you both cowards?
VIDLER: It's not that, but, well, wherever he went, he never came back, did he.
ERIMEM: I will go. Just show me what to do to get back.

DOCTOR: I suppose I should be grateful they maintain atmosphere up here. Slightly stale air, recycled a million times, but beggars can't be choosers. Wonder what this is. An impressive looking door, certainly. Maybe a vault, Doctor. What do you say? (door opens) It's like a cold storage facility, with its own teleport terminal. Interesting.
(Teleport activates.)
ERIMEM: Doctor!
DOCTOR: Erimem. How splendid. I was beginning to worry about you. Here, let me help you up.
ERIMEM: What is this place?
DOCTOR: I'm not quite sure yet. Some kind of cryogenic store, I think.
ERIMEM: And what's in these drawers?
DOCTOR: Oh dear. We don't want to be looking at something like that, do we.
ERIMEM: What has happened to the rest of him?
DOCTOR: I think he'd been eaten.
ERIMEM: That's sick!

DOCTOR: I've suddenly got a very bad feeling about this place.
ERIMEM: Is it a House of the Dead? Will the restless spirits rise?
DOCTOR: No. No, it's not a morgue.
GENERAL: It certainly is not.
ERIMEM: What? Doctor, what is that?
GENERAL: I am General Makra'Thon of the Khellian Royal Guard, and this? This is my larder.

[Part Three]

DOCTOR: Larder?
GENERAL: Larder, food store, pantry. I was hoping to get a bite to eat. Frozen would have been fine, but fresh meat is so much tastier.
ERIMEM: Fresh meat? Does this creature want to eat us?
GENERAL: Just one of you will suffice for now. No need to be greedy.
ERIMEM: No, no!
DOCTOR: Erimem...
(Weapons fire, Erimem screams.)
DOCTOR: General! There was no need for violence.
GENERAL: You saw the girl run from me.
DOCTOR: She was trying to escape!
GENERAL: There is no escape from the Khellian Royal Guard.

(Bellip is weeping. Teleport.)

PERI: That doesn't get any better. The Doctor was lying. Bellip? Are you here?
BELLIP: Too big. I can't deal with it.
PERI: Bellip, where are you? What is this place, some kind of lecture room?
BELLIP: I don't know. It's so large.
PERI: Oh, there you are. What are you doing under that desk?
BELLIP: I needed somewhere to hide.
PERI: From what?
BELLIP: I don't know. After you left me, I was just filled with panic, so I dialled a random. I just wanted to get away, and I came here, and it's so big!
PERI: It's just a small hall.
BELLIP: It's the biggest space I've ever been in. So big.
PERI: Bellip, don't panic. Get a grip.
BELLIP: I can't. It's too much.
PERI: Bellip! Breathe like you did before. Slowly. Hold it in. That's it. Then breathe out. That's it. Just calm down. You're in control. You're perfectly safe. You're still inside. There's a roof above you, and four walls around you.
BELLIP: (calmer) I'm sorry. You must think I'm an idiot.
PERI: It's not your fault. It's the way you've been brought up. You mustn't feel bad.
BELLIP: Oh, but I do. You talked about the outside, about being in the open, but I can't even enter a large room without having a panic attack. So how will I ever cope when I make the Return? Maybe that's why I've never been chosen.

VIDLER: She should have been back by now.
LAROQ: How long has it been?
VIDLER: I don't know. Five minutes? Ten? What's it matter? She was just going to port in and port back again to tell us where she went. Maybe she found something there she wasn't expecting.
LAROQ: Like what?
VIDLER: I don't know, do I?
LAROQ: Go after her, then.
VIDLER: What?
LAROQ: You want to do things, be proactive, don't you? You're always telling me that we're too passive. So act. Do something. Follow Erimem. Find out what's happened to her.
VIDLER: And leave you alone?
LAROQ: I'll cope. I might even prefer it.
VIDLER: I think we should wait a little longer.
LAROQ: Maybe she fainted in transit. Well, she's not used to porting, is she?
VIDLER: In which case she's probably in a heap on the port dais. I could use the recall.
LAROQ: Are you sure?
VIDLER: Okay, here goes.
LAROQ: Oh, nothing.

VIDLER: She must have stepped off the platform.

LAROQ: Or been taken off.

VIDLER: We can't stay here. If the Servitors catch us, we'll never get another chance like this to explore.

LAROQ: No. No, we should wait for Erimem.

VIDLER: You were just telling me to do something. We have to seize our chance. We might never get another opportunity like this. Make a mental note of the setting. We can always try and find her later.

LAROQ: You want to go back into the corridor?

VIDLER: I want to see where it goes. Are you coming?

LAROQ: I don't know. No. Vid. Vidler! Wait, I'm coming! Don't leave me.

DOCTOR: Erimem. She's still breathing, thank goodness.

GENERAL: Step away from the female.

DOCTOR: What have you done to her? There was no call for that.

GENERAL: She was attempting to escape. Besides, it was a non-fatal charge. She will recover consciousness, eventually.

DOCTOR: You shot her in the back. What kind of soldier are you?

GENERAL: A hungry one. You're not one of the colonists. Who are you?

DOCTOR: I'm the Doctor. I travel.

GENERAL: Really. How unfortunate for you.

DOCTOR: I've some things on my travels, some amazing sights, but I've rarely come across something as foul as I've discovered here.

GENERAL: And what is that, Doctor?

DOCTOR: You've turned this colony into some kind of farm, haven't you?

GENERAL: Everyone has to eat.

DOCTOR: These colonists are sentient beings.

GENERAL: Meat is meat.

DOCTOR: No! How can any civilised creature eat something with which he's just had a conversation?

GENERAL: As a rule, I don't. I was always brought up not to play with my food.

(Erimem groans.)

DOCTOR: How long has this been going on?

GENERAL: That's not your concern.

DOCTOR: I will not allow this to continue.

GENERAL: And who are you to stop a troop of trained warriors? Will you talk us into submission?

DOCTOR: I'll find a way.

GENERAL: I doubt that. You have no idea what you are dealing with, do you?

DOCTOR: Don't I? The Khellian race. I'm sure I've heard of you. Let's see. Brutal, militaristic, aggressive. Is that you?

GENERAL: How about respected, successful, all-conquering.

DOCTOR: It's all a question of perspective.

GENERAL: The strong survive. The weak fall. It is the way of nature. We are all creatures on the food chain.

DOCTOR: And you think you're at the top of that chain.

GENERAL: Well, of course. What else is there?

DOCTOR: Me.

(The General laughs.)

DOCTOR: Am I meant to be frightened of you just because you've got a gun?

GENERAL: You think I'm a fool. Are you expecting me to throw away my weapon to provide a level playing field?

DOCTOR: It might be nice.

GENERAL: Khellians are not fools.

DOCTOR: No, I can see that, but you have your weaknesses. Every creature has its Achilles heel.

GENERAL: Khellians have no weaknesses, only strengths.

DOCTOR: What kind of creatures are you? Reptilian, cold-blooded, air-breathing. So, not particularly at home in deep space.

GENERAL: Khellians have developed survival suits for alien environments.

DOCTOR: But Khellians are still humanoid in form, so you have the same weak spots as us. The throat, the belly, the back of the neck.

(The General gurgles.)

DOCTOR: Well done, Erimem. I hoped you were listening.

ERIMEM: Is it dead?

DOCTOR: Just stunned.

ERIMEM: What is it?

DOCTOR: I'll explain later. We'd better get away from here before he recovers.

(Alarms sounding.)

AUNTIE: I don't understand, Butler. What's going on?

BUTLER: It appears that someone has accessed the forbidden zones inside the colony ship.

AUNTIE: Aliens or colonists?

BUTLER: It is possible that it is the Doctor and his friend. They are no longer in the holding cell.

AUNTIE: Then find them.

BUTLER: There has also been one transport to the space station, but just the one.

AUNTIE: Run a check on all habitat cells. Make sure it's only the Doctor and his companions we have to worry about.

BUTLER: As you command.

AUNTIE: After all this time. We cannot afford for things to go wrong now. Not now.

BUTLER: All the colonists who are due to Return today are prepared.

AUNTIE: Thank goodness for that. And the rest?

BUTLER: Three colonists are unaccounted for.

AUNTIE: And some of them are loose in the forbidden areas of the ship?

BUTLER: Apparently.

AUNTIE: Terrific. Can you identify them?

BUTLER: The missing colonists are 256 Laroq, 147 Vidler, and 478 Bellip.

AUNTIE: Bellip? No.

BUTLER: I am sorry, ma'am.

AUNTIE: Sorry won't do. I need action. Activate more servitors. Find those children now, before it's too late.

BUTLER: As you wish.

AUNTIE: Your priority is Bellip. Bring the boys back dead or alive, but make sure Bellip is unharmed. Understand?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am.

PERI: How are you doing now?

BELLIP: Oh, I'm feeling a little better.

PERI: Can you move any faster?

BELLIP: Oh, I don't know about that. One step at a time, you said.

PERI: I know what I said. I was kinda hoping you might do it a little quicker than that. It's like walking with my old granny.

BELLIP: Your what?

PERI: My grandmother. My mother's mother?

BELLIP: I don't even know my mother.

PERI: You don't?

BELLIP: I was brought up by Servitors.

PERI: Robots like Butler?

BELLIP: Yes.

PERI: But you must have had a mother.

BELLIP: I've never thought about it. We don't think about it.

PERI: Look around you. This is some kind of meeting room. You colonists didn't always live like this in isolation. You must have been normal social creatures once.

BELLIP: Not in my time.

PERI: But if your people lived like that before, they can do it again.

BELLIP: (gasp) Live among other people? Sharing spaces? Oh, I don't know. That makes me feel ill. It's too much. I can't.

PERI: Oh, come on, Bellip. Don't lose it now.

BELLIP: The things you're saying. You're filling my head with things I can't deal with.

PERI: Remember the breathing exercises. Close your eyes and concentrate on breathing. That's it. And hold it. Five, six, seven, eight, and let it out slowly.

BELLIP: Okay. I think I'm okay.

PERI: Let's move out then. Are you up for that?

BELLIP: I'll try, but you'll have to be patient with me.

PERI: Come on. This way.

LAROQ: Where is this going, Vidler?

VIDLER: I've no idea, but I want to find out.

LAROQ: Where is everyone? I thought there were thousands of colonists, but all these cells are empty.

VIDLER: Perhaps they've been lying to us all this time. How many other colonists do you know?

LAROQ: You, Bellip. Er, I saw a medic once years ago. There was Raqir. I've spoken to someone called Lakkar. Er, another boy called Jobie. Who else?

VIDLER: Apart from Auntie, of course. Well, there's the other rebels, Raqir, Garma and Magri.

LAROQ: You said there were eight of us.
VIDLER: I may have exaggerated.
LAROQ: So, between us, we only know a handful of people.
VIDLER: There must be more. There must be.
LAROQ: Perhaps more people have Returned than we've been told.
VIDLER: Or maybe they haven't.

ERIMEM: Where now?
DOCTOR: This way. I want to put as much distance between us and the General as possible.
ERIMEM: When I first saw him, I thought it was Sobek.
DOCTOR: Sobek? One of your fellow gods, isn't he? Head of a crocodile, body of a man. That's the fellow, right?
ERIMEM: God of the Nile. But it wasn't him, was it?
DOCTOR: No, the General is from an alien reptilian race called the Khellians, and I doubt he's here alone.
ERIMEM: The eggs Peri and I found, are they...
DOCTOR: Khellian eggs, almost certainly. I'm trying to remember what I know about their life cycle. They have a Queen who produces thousands of eggs at a time, then dies. Until the eggs hatch, the Khellians are in a vulnerable state. The Queen's Royal Guard must protect the brood at all costs.
ERIMEM: What do they want with the colonists?
DOCTOR: It's simple. They've clearly been using the colony as some kind of farm. I fear it's time for a harvest.
ERIMEM: That's horrible. Can we stop them?
DOCTOR: I certainly intend to try. We need to warn Auntie about the presence of these aliens and the threat they pose, but we also need to know where the aliens are and in what numbers. Can you lead me to the area where you found the eggs?
ERIMEM: I think so.
DOCTOR: Lead on, then, Erimem. Lead on.

PERI: Another corridor.
BELLIP: Oh, I don't mind. The way they curve, I can pretend it's just a long room.
PERI: In that case, can we move a little faster then?
BELLIP: Oh, I'm trying, Peri. I really am.
PERI: Stop.
BELLIP: What is it?
PERI: I heard something up ahead. Quick, up against the wall.
BELLIP: (sotto) I can't hear anything.
PERI: (sotto) Feel the floor. Vibrations. There's someone coming.
BELLIP: (sotto) Someone? Who?
VIDLER: It just doesn't make sense. There must be someone else here somewhere.
LAROQ: Look!
PERI: Don't run.
VIDLER: Who are you?
PERI: I'm Peri, and this is Bellip.
LAROQ: Bellip. Oh, it's me, Laroq.
BELLIP: Laroq? Ah!
PERI: She's fainted! Do one of you two lads think you could possibly lend a hand? She's heavier than she looks and I don't want to drop her.
LAROQ: You're touching her.
PERI: Just trying to support her. It's not a crime.
VIDLER: Here, let me.
PERI: Thank you. Lay her down a moment. I'm sure she'll be okay in a minute or two. The shock of being with three other people was just too much for her.
LAROQ: I know how she feels.
VIDLER: It's okay, Laroq. You can do this. It's mind over matter.

(Whispering)
ERIMEM: There you are.
DOCTOR: Just two of the General's guards. Good.
ERIMEM: What is that thing at the back?
DOCTOR: That is the Khellian Queen. She's dying.
ERIMEM: Should we attack?
DOCTOR: No.
ERIMEM: Do you think there are any more of them?

DOCTOR: There will be if those eggs hatch. They've turned the space station's power generator into a nursery, using heat to mature the brood.

ERIMEM: But when the eggs hatch, the colony will be overrun. We should destroy the station and destroy the brood.

DOCTOR: You must be feeling better. That sounds like the Erimem I first met, the warrior Queen.

ERIMEM: I'm just being practical.

(Door opens and closes. Speaking normally and walking.)

ERIMEM: Why did we not see those guards earlier, when Peri and I first found the eggs.

DOCTOR: Hibernation. The Khellians hibernate for long periods. The last brood have died out, leaving this Queen and a handful of guards to seed the next one. Once the Queen woke to lay the eggs, the remaining guards come out of hibernation to protect them.

ERIMEM: Meanwhile the Queen dies?

DOCTOR: She's done her job. Well, not all of it. There's one last task she has, even in death.

ERIMEM: Huh?

DOCTOR: Let's not think about that. Ah, here we are. Back to the central control.

ERIMEM: What are you doing now?

DOCTOR: Scanning the colony ship. I want to find Peri.

ERIMEM: Where is she?

DOCTOR: I left her exploring. Oh, that's interesting.

ERIMEM: What does it mean?

DOCTOR: A number of human lifesigns wandering aimlessly around the corridors. Three, maybe four. Gamma deck.

ERIMEM: Could one be Peri?

DOCTOR: What do you think? Now, I need to talk to Auntie. Will you be okay waiting here? I want you to keep an eye on the Khellians. If they start to move, let me know. Take refuge in the Tardis if you have to. You have a key, don't you?

ERIMEM: Round my neck, as usual. Good luck then.

DOCTOR: And to you. Brave heart, Erimem.

GENERAL: Your Majesty? You summoned me.

QUEEN: It is time. Do not fail us.

GENERAL: Your Majesty. The Queen has died. Now our only hope is the hatchlings she has left us to protect. You two, move the Queen's corpse into the middle of the room. The first thing the new generation sees will be their mother. Quiet. It begins. The hatching will soon start. When it does, the hatchlings will need fresh meat. We cannot wait for the next delivery of Returnees. We shall go directly to the source. They shall need sustenance for the days ahead. Soldiers, prepare for a hunt. We can transport together from the main control room.

AUNTIE: Doctor, where have you been?

DOCTOR: Auntie, sorry about that. I needed to do a bit of exploring.

AUNTIE: In the forbidden zones?

DOCTOR: I wanted to talk to you about that. You've made most of the colony ship out of bounds. Why?

AUNTIE: It was necessary. We need to keep order.

DOCTOR: To keep control, you mean. Actually, I've been back to your space station. You've got some unwanted guests up there, you know.

AUNTIE: It must be the day for unwanted guests. Where is your companion, Peri?

DOCTOR: She's on gamma deck, sector 16. She appears to be with some of your people.

AUNTIE: Our missing colonists. Thank you, Doctor. You've been very helpful. Butler, the children are in sector 16 on gamma deck.

BUTLER [OC]: Understood, ma'am.

AUNTIE: How quickly can you get there?

BUTLER [OC]: I can port there in seconds, ma'am.

AUNTIE: Do it.

DOCTOR: There's something else I need to talk to you about.

AUNTIE: Which is?

DOCTOR: The alien presence on the space station.

AUNTIE: More visitors. How unusual. Are you sure?

DOCTOR: I've seen them with my own eyes, and had a run-in with one of their number. And they're not visitors, they're squatters.

AUNTIE: Squatters?

DOCTOR: You must warn your people. As far as I can tell, they've just woken up from a deep sleep and they could begin porting down here at any moment.

AUNTIE: And what do these aliens want?

DOCTOR: Food. And you and your colonists are on the menu.

ERIMEM: Come on, Doctor. Hurry up. I think I've got company.

GENERAL: Come on. The sooner we get down to the colony, the sooner we can sate our appetites.

Assemble on the terminal. Activate the transfer. (transmat)

ERIMEM: They've gone. All of them.

PERI: Bellip? Bellip, can you hear me?

BELLIP: Oh. Where?

PERI: It's okay, you're safe.

BELLIP: Oh, I'm sorry. It was such a shock. I am sorry, Laroq. I had no idea what you looked like.

LAROQ: I hope you weren't disappointed.

BELLIP: No, not at all.

PERI: If you don't mind, can we do the teen romance stuff later?

VIDLER: I thought that Erimem was one of a kind, but maybe I was wrong.

PERI: You've seen Erimem?

LAROQ: She ported into my cell, uninvited.

VIDLER: It was Erimem who showed us how to get into these corridors. We were exploring with her...

PERI: So where is she now?

LAROQ: She went to see where our friend Raqir last travelled to.

PERI: But she didn't come back? Why didn't you go after her?

LAROQ: We, we er...

VIDLER: We didn't know if it was wise.

PERI: So you just left her? Pathetic.

VIDLER: There's a port over here just activating.

BELLIP: (panic) More people?

PERI: Quick, take cover.

VIDLER: It looks like a Servitor.

PERI: Laroq, take Bellip into a cell and stay there until you hear from me.

LAROQ: Right.

PERI: Vidler and I will try and draw it away.

VIDLER: We will?

PERI: Come on!

BUTLER: Miss Peri, please stop.

PERI: Sorry, gotta run.

BUTLER: I am authorised to use offensive weaponry.

PERI: Isn't all weaponry offensive?

VIDLER: Only if you're at the wrong end of it.

PERI: Is he following us?

VIDLER: Yes, I think he is.

(Weapons fire.)

PERI: I think the plan's working then.

VIDLER: So far. Why have you stopped?

PERI: Shh. Look up ahead.

VIDLER: What's that?

PERI: It looks to me like some kind of uniformed reptile.

VIDLER: An alien?

PERI: Give the man a cigar.

VIDLER: Is that some kind of weapon?

PERI: Another cigar, please.

(Weapons fire.)

PERI: In here, now.

(Door opens and closes.)

VIDLER: I wonder whose cell this was?

PERI: Listen. Use the port in here. Go after Erimem. With a bit of luck they'll think we've both ported out of here and I can double back to the others.

VIDLER: But I

PERI: Just do it!

VIDLER: Okay.

VIDLER: Erimem?

ERIMEM: Vidler? What are you doing here?

VIDLER: Looking for you. This is amazing. This must be the control room up on Medusa. I never imagined in

my wildest dreams

ERIMEM: You can gawk later. I need your help.

VIDLER: With what? The reptile things?

ERIMEM: You've seen them?

VIDLER: Just one. It didn't seem very friendly.

ERIMEM: They're not, and there's lots of them, I'm afraid. They've been living on this space station, breeding. The engine room is full of their eggs. But that means we have a chance. Eggs are vulnerable. If we act now we can destroy them before they hatch.

VIDLER: Destroy them? How are we going to do that?

ERIMEM: I don't know, but if you've got any ideas I'd love to hear them.

VIDLER: Ideas? Me? I don't know. I've never had to destroy a horde of alien eggs before. I don't know where to begin.

ERIMEM: We begin by seeing what we're dealing with. Every successful battle depends on good intelligence.

VIDLER: I can't help thinking the intelligent thing to do would be to run away.

ERIMEM: Stop twittering! You're no better than Laroq.

VIDLER: Ah.

ERIMEM: Now come on.

DOCTOR: You have to believe me.

AUNTIE: Oh, I do, Doctor. Butler, get back here now.

BUTLER [OC]: But Bellip...

AUNTIE: I need you here now, Butler. That's an order.

DOCTOR: I think the Khellians have been coming here for some time, intercepting the candidates you've been trying to return home and taking them for their own needs. They must have stumbled on the space station and made a home on it.

BUTLER: You required me urgently, ma'am?

AUNTIE: Yes, I do. Secure the Doctor.

DOCTOR: What?

BUTLER: I am sorry, sir, but I need you to place your hands behind your back.

DOCTOR: Auntie, this is madness. What do you think you're doing? You have to listen to me. The lives of all your colonists depend on it.

AUNTIE: Do you think I don't know that?

DOCTOR: I'm your only chance of survival.

AUNTIE: Survival? Don't lecture me on survival. I know what the price of survival is, and believe me, I've been paying it.

DOCTOR: You know.

AUNTIE: Of course I know.

DOCTOR: All of it? Do you know about the aliens and their visits and why they're here?

AUNTIE: Everything.

DOCTOR: You're a collaborator. You've sold out your own people to a race of aliens who want to feed on them.

AUNTIE: That's enough. Butler, if he says another word, kill him.

DOCTOR: But

AUNTIE: One word, Butler will do it. I mean, what's one more death after so many?

(Door opens and closes.)

PERI: Laroq! Bellip!

LAROQ: Peri, what's happening? Where's Vidler?

PERI: On the space station.

LAROQ: Is he all right?

PERI: I hope so. What happened to the robot?

LAROQ: He ported out of here in a hurry.

PERI: Maybe there are more of these aliens about. We have to be careful.

BELLIP: Aliens? What are you talking about?

PERI: I just had a close encounter of the nearly fatal kind with a great big walking lizard.

LAROQ: But that's not possible. Nobody ever comes here.

PERI: I'm here, aren't I? Now come on.

BELLIP: Where are we going to go?

PERI: We need to find the Doctor.

VIDLER: There are hundreds of them.

ERIMEM: And we have to destroy them all.

VIDLER: Smash them one by one? We'd be here forever.
ERIMEM: I don't know. There must be something we could use as a weapon. Let's split up and look. Wait.
VIDLER: I thought we wanted to destroy them.
ERIMEM: What was that sound?
VIDLER: It wasn't me.
ERIMEM: Vidler!
VIDLER: They're hatching. They're all beginning to hatch!

[Part Four]

ERIMEM: Vidler, stay still.
VIDLER: What?
ERIMEM: Look, they're moving past us, towards that corpse.
VIDLER: What are they doing to it?
ERIMEM: I think they're feeding on her.
VIDLER: Oh, that's gross.
ERIMEM: Mothers are always expected to provide for their offspring.
VIDLER: But not with their own flesh.
ERIMEM: Come on. While they're still weak and busy, let's get out of here.

AUNTIE: You just couldn't keep your nose out, could you, Doctor?
DOCTOR: Butler, listen to me. You're loyal to Auntie and to the colony. You're not going to let her make a terrible mistake, are you?
AUNTIE: You're pushing your luck.
BUTLER: Perhaps we should listen to what the Doctor has to say.
AUNTIE: I don't want to hear anything he's got to say.
DOCTOR: Butler, tell me about the deal with the aliens. Is it to do with the other domes?
AUNTIE: I gave you an order, Butler.
BUTLER: I cannot obey a flawed order. My ultimate duty is to the colony, not you.
DOCTOR: The other domes are full of colonists in suspended animation, aren't they? Colonists that were never defrosted at planetfall.
BUTLER: Conditions were not right. We had to wait for the terraforming process to complete.
DOCTOR: And it's those sleeping colonists you've been sending up to the Khellians on Medusa, isn't it? Food fresh from the freezer.
BUTLER: It was a logical solution to the problem of the Khellian presence on the space station.
DOCTOR: Perhaps you could release my wrists now. I may not be as human as Auntie, but I do operate better with some blood reaching my hands.
BUTLER: Of course, Doctor.
DOCTOR: I'm sorry, Auntie, but this has to stop right now.
AUNTIE: What? What are you going to do now?
DOCTOR: I'm going to beam back to the space station, whereupon I am going to do whatever it takes to stop the Khellians from harvesting any more colonists.
AUNTIE: No! You'll just make things worse. I can't let you. Stand away from that teleport pad. Butler, shoot the Doctor's hand off if he so much as reaches for that control.
BUTLER: Auntie?
AUNTIE: Butler, for the future of the colony.
DOCTOR: Let me go and this colony may just have a future.
(Teleport activates.)
AUNTIE: What? No!
BUTLER: It is too late. He's gone. Someone must have recalled him from the station.

DOCTOR: Well done, Erimem. I was beginning to worry that you weren't paying attention.
ERIMEM: We've only just got here.
DOCTOR: We?
ERIMEM: This is Vidler. Peri sent him here. Doctor, the eggs, they're beginning to hatch.
DOCTOR: Then we've got less time than I thought.
ERIMEM: Doctor, won't Auntie or Butler just follow you up here?
DOCTOR: Not if I can throw a spanner in the works. There, that ought to do it.
ERIMEM: What have you done?
VIDLER: He's just used the override controls to shut down the transmat system's buffers. Now the internal system cannot be accessed by anyone. The only way to move around is by foot.
ERIMEM: But what about Peri?
DOCTOR: Is she still on gamma deck?

VIDLER: She was when I left her, with Bellip and Laroq.

DOCTOR: We should be able to see her from up here. A scan should do it. No, she's not there. Let's check the teleport activity. Ah, there she is. Location 458. Punch that code into this system here and we should be able to speak to her. Peri, can you hear me?

PERI [OC]: Doctor? Where are you?

DOCTOR: Never mind about that. You need to get out of there as quickly as possible.

PERI [OC]: Easier said than done. There are some aliens down here who want to have us to dinner, and I don't mean as guests.

DOCTOR: I know. Listen to me. We can access schematics of the colony ship and guide you to an airlock.

PERI [OC]: With these guys? Are you kidding? They're freaked enough being out of their rooms.

DOCTOR: You have to get off the ship, Peri.

PERI [OC]: Okay. Game for a laugh. How do we keep in touch?

DOCTOR: There are intercoms at every port terminal. Just note the access code 230.

PERI [OC]: 230. Got it.

DOCTOR: Right then. Erimem, Vidler, this is a schematic of the colony ship. Peri and her friends are here and they need to get to here, to the airlock. Can you talk her through it?

ERIMEM: I think so, but wouldn't you be better at this?

DOCTOR: I'm going to try and reason with Auntie, but this time I'll take the Tardis. Keeping the teleport system offline is in all our interests. We can't use it to move around on the surface but equally the General can't use it to return up here. They're trapped on the colony ship.

ERIMEM: But what about the alien eggs?

DOCTOR: Have you secured the doors to the engine room?

VIDLER: Yes, but they won't hold against a sustained attack.

DOCTOR: We have to deal with them while they're still weak. What's the power source on this station?

VIDLER: Nuclear fusion.

DOCTOR: Can you find a way to remove the radiation shields from the generators?

VIDLER: I can try.

ERIMEM: Will that stop them?

DOCTOR: I'm afraid it will. I don't see that we have any other choice.

PERI [OC]: Okay, we're ready to move out. Which way?

DOCTOR: Good luck to both of you.

(The Tardis dematerialises.)

VIDLER: Hey, that's neat. A personalised transmat.

ERIMEM: It's more than that. It's home. And seeing it disappear like that, I realise one day I will watch it fade away and it will never come back.

VIDLER: Hey, don't worry. The Doctor won't leave you.

ERIMEM: Won't he?

PERI [OC]: Hey guys, I could use some directions down here.

ERIMEM: Sorry, Peri. Let me see where you need to go.

BUTLER: There's nothing I can do. The system is locked and the override is controlled from the space station.

AUNTIE: And without the teleport, we can't get there. We're trapped.

(The Tardis materialises.)

AUNTIE: What in the name of goodness is that?

BUTLER: I believe it is the Doctor's vehicle.

(Tardis door opens.)

DOCTOR: Don't shoot. We need to talk.

(Tardis door closes.)

AUNTIE: Doctor, you have to unlock the transmat override.

DOCTOR: I don't think that's a very good idea.

AUNTIE: I'm the leader of this colony. I know what's best for my people.

DOCTOR: Do you really? And in what way is feeding them wholesale to a bunch of starving reptiles best for them?

AUNTIE: I had no choice.

DOCTOR: We always have choices, Auntie.

AUNTIE: All right, maybe I did. That's what leadership is about, isn't it? Making the hard choices. But I was being pragmatic.

DOCTOR: Pragmatic?

AUNTIE: You have to understand. We had nowhere to go. The transmat relays back to the Federation had broken down. We were forgotten, cut off, withering on the vine. Sunspot activity had set the terraforming process back by decades. And then the Khellians found us.

DOCTOR: And they couldn't believe their luck. A nice space station to inhabit, a supply of food, a perfect set-

up in which to produce a new brood.

AUNTIE: They offered me a deal, a chance for my family to survive. One by one the Khellians have taken the members of my family to the space station, and sent them by hyperspace transmat link to another Federation colony.

DOCTOR: And you believe that?

AUNTIE: We had a deal, and I believe the Khellians are honourable.

DOCTOR: I don't. No one has escaped.

AUNTIE: Of course they have.

DOCTOR: Auntie, I've been on the space station. Check the records. There have been no deep space transits. Your family have been farmed alongside the other colonists you've sent to their deaths. The Khellians like fresh meat as well as frozen.

AUNTIE: No! No! I just had to buy some time, time to get the planet ready to sustain us. Then I was planning to revive the survivors in the other domes. We would have had the numbers then to fight back.

DOCTOR: You can still do that.

AUNTIE: No, I, I need you to do something else for me. There is still one member of my family in the colony. Bellip, my granddaughter.

DOCTOR: I see.

AUNTIE: My daughter's only daughter. Perhaps part of me always knew. I kept her back where I could see her. Please, make sure she survives.

DOCTOR: I'll do what I can.

PERI: How are you holding up, Bellip?

BELLIP: I don't feel very well. I'm not sure I can do this.

PERI: Of course you can. Lean on Laroq.

LAROQ: It's okay, Bellip. We're nearly there.

PERI: Let me check in with Erimem. Erimem? We're at teleport terminal on D deck. Now where?

ERIMEM: Be patient, Peri, please. Right. Turn right, and go until the 8th, no, 9th door. It's in there.

PERI: Okay. I'll call when we get there. Let's move it then.

AUNTIE: Are they oxygen breathers?

DOCTOR: I think so.

AUNTIE: You realise this is the original colony ship?

DOCTOR: It's not hard to see when you look.

AUNTIE: The engines are useless, but most internal systems are still functioning, including the life support systems. It can be sealed and drained of oxygen.

DOCTOR: I don't like to kill.

AUNTIE: It's kill or be killed, Doctor. Those creatures will eat you and your companions as quickly as they will eat us.

DOCTOR: I fear you're right.

AUNTIE: But we need a distraction. If the aliens notice the change in the atmosphere too soon, they'll have time to try and escape.

DOCTOR: Well, the General already wants my blood, which makes me the obvious candidate to be bait.

AUNTIE: Let Butler be your guide. He knows the ship even better than its designers.

DOCTOR: I'll take your word for that. Now, there are only a handful of adult Khellians, and there are none on the space station right now. Can you operate the life support from here?

AUNTIE: I can do it all from here.

DOCTOR: Come on then, let's go and find out what hunting feels like from the sharp end.

PERI: Step inside the airlock, then.

BELLIP: It's just a small room. There's nothing in here.

LAROQ: Except another set of doors.

PERI: Let's just close these behind us.

BELLIP: I like this. I feel safe here.

PERI: It might be a good idea for you to close your eyes for the next bit.

AUNTIE: Computer, access internal climate control.

COMPUTER: System activated.

AUNTIE: Initiate total atmosphere drain from all parts of the ship.

COMPUTER: Venting atmosphere will create conditions that are hostile to life.

AUNTIE: I'm aware of that. How long?

COMPUTER: Please restate the question.

AUNTIE: How long before oxygen levels are low enough for anyone out there to notice?

COMPUTER: Air breathing lifeforms will begin to suffer symptoms of oxygen deprivation in approximately

thirteen minutes. Total vacuum will be achieved in sixteen minutes.

AUNTIE: Too long. Too long.

GENERAL: (distant) They must be somewhere. Find me the Doctor. I should like to taste his flesh myself.

DOCTOR: That sounds like our man.

AUNTIE: Wait here, Doctor. Let me prime the hunt.

GENERAL: Who goes there? Ah, the android. Come here.

BUTLER: General Makra'Thon, how may I be of service?

GENERAL: Where is the creature who calls himself the Doctor?

BUTLER: He is not a colonist. I have no information.

GENERAL: Access your system computer. I have to know where he is.

BUTLER: The latest information I have is that he is at large somewhere in this colony ship. The teleport system is currently non-functioning, so the Doctor must be travelling by foot.

GENERAL: Then I shall hunt him down. Assign Servitors to assist me.

BUTLER: I am very sorry, General. All Servitors are required to repair the transmat system.

GENERAL: In that case, we will do it ourselves.

(Sound of wind. Bellip whimpering.)

LAROQ: What, what is it?

PERI: That is the surface of your planet. It's your home.

BELLIP: But, but where is the ceiling?

PERI: Well, there isn't one. Just go straight up and you'll hit that space station of yours

BELLIP: I feel sick.

PERI: We can't stop now, we've come so far. You see that dome? That's where we have to go.

LAROQ: Across the open space?

PERI: It's only about a hundred yards.

BELLIP: It might as well be a hundred miles. I can't go out there.

PERI: You have to!

LAROQ: I think I might manage it, but not without help.

PERI: Okay then, we'll do this in relays. Bellip, wait here. Do the breathing exercise I taught you.

BELLIP: Okay.

PERI: And try not to panic. Laroq? Let's go.

(Walking.)

LAROQ: Vidler always said it was our destiny to feel the sun on our backs.

PERI: Maybe he was right. Just concentrate on putting one foot after the other. And don't look up.

(Weapons fire obscuring some dialogue.)

DOCTOR: You know, this might not have been such a good idea.

GENERAL: You can run, Doctor, but not forever.

DOCTOR: I only need just long enough.

GENERAL: My men are [unintelligible]. You're only putting off the inevitable. I look forward to tasting your flesh.

BUTLER: This way, Doctor.

DOCTOR: What? Where are you?

BUTLER: In here, quick. There are more Khellians.

(Door closes.)

DOCTOR: Now what, Butler? Out in the corridor there are Khellians in each direction, and now we're trapped in a small room with a defunct teleport terminal and not a lot of options. This is not going to plan at all.

COMPUTER: Oxygen levels at 96% optimum and falling.

AUNTIE: This is taking too long.

COMPUTER: The ship is a large repository of atmosphere.

AUNTIE: There must be another way. Of course. Computer. Arm self-destruct.

COMPUTER: Executive authority is required.

AUNTIE: On my authority as leader.

COMPUTER: Confirm identity. Retinal scan required.

AUNTIE: Here, read my eye. Satisfied?

COMPUTER: Commander identity confirmed. Self-destruct armed. System parameters ready.

AUNTIE: Initiate total self-destruct on the ship on a ten minute countdown. On my mark. Mark!

COMPUTER: Countdown has begun.

AUNTIE: And computer, I need access to the munitions store. Belt and braces, as my father used to say. Belt and braces.

VIDLER: Ah, it's no good. I just can't do it from here. The system isn't designed to give access to the generators from this control centre.

ERIMEM: There must be something we can do.

VIDLER: I need to go back into the engine room. I'll have to do it the old-fashioned way. I can release the radiation shields by hand.

ERIMEM: Wouldn't that be dangerous?

VIDLER: Not if I beam out as soon as I've done it.

ERIMEM: But the Doctor disabled your transmats.

VIDLER: I can show you how to reverse that. Give me five minutes, then initiate this programme.

ERIMEM: What will that do?

VIDLER: That will open up the buffers for one minute. Long enough for me to port out.

ERIMEM: Are you sure about this?

VIDLER: If the little aliens start nipping at my legs, the radiation suit should protect me for long enough to do what I have to do. Don't worry, Erimem. Laroq is always telling me I'm all talk and no action. Perhaps I can prove him wrong.

(Alarm.)

ERIMEM: What's that?

VIDLER: Some kind of alarm, from the colony ship. Oh no. You need to get hold of Peri. Fast.

PERI: There, you made it. Rest now.

LAROQ: Oh, thank you, Peri. I couldn't have done it without you.

PERI: I'd better get back to Bellip.

ERIMEM [OC]: Peri? Peri, are you there yet?

PERI: Erimem? We just got here. What's up?

ERIMEM [OC]: Something's happened. You've got less time than we thought.

PERI: What is it?

VIDLER [OC]: According to the computer systems on the space station, the colony ship has been set to self-destruct.

PERI: What? But the Doctor...

ERIMEM [OC]: We don't understand it either, but you've got three minutes to get clear. Hurry.

PERI: Laroq, stay here, and be ready to close these doors the second Bellip and I get here.

BUTLER: There is another way out of here.

DOCTOR: Let me guess. A ventilation shaft.

BUTLER: A service tunnel, designed to allow Servitors to move about without disturbing the crew.

DOCTOR: I'm a little larger than most of your Servitors.

BUTLER: I think you will manage. Quickly. I will replace the cover when you have entered.

DOCTOR: I think I might need to go on a diet.

GENERAL [OC]: Get this door open.

DOCTOR: If I'm not to be part of someone else's diet, I think I'd better get going.

(Cover replaced, door opens.)

GENERAL: Servitor, I thought you were meant to be aiding us.

BUTLER: How may I be of service?

GENERAL: The Doctor, are you hiding him? Step away from that wall.

BUTLER: I'm sorry, I cannot do that.

GENERAL: Move or I'll fire.

BUTLER: If you must.

(Weapons fire.)

BUTLER: You have damaged this unit.

GENERAL: Damaged? Damn. I was hoping for total destruction.

(Weapons fire, kaBoom.)

VIDLER: (sotto) Erimem, can you hear me?

ERIMEM [OC]: Vidler, where are you now?

VIDLER: (sotto) Inside the engine room. The rad suit has a communications channel.

ERIMEM [OC]: What are the aliens doing?

VIDLER: (sotto) Most of them are still eating. They don't seem to have noticed me yet.

ERIMEM [OC]: Can you remove the shields?

VIDLER: (sotto) I'm just trying to bypass the safety protocols now. That's done it. Right, here goes. You'd better stand by to get the teleports back online.

(Crash.)

AUNTIE: Who's there?

DOCTOR: It's just me. Now I remember why I usually get my companions to do the crawling around in small spaces. How are we doing?
AUNTIE: A dozen Khellians have joined the General.
DOCTOR: That's probably the entire Guard. What about the atmospheric drain? The air felt a bit thin in the service corridor, but it was a bit cramped in there.
AUNTIE: It's taking some time, so I have made other arrangements.
DOCTOR: Other arrangements?
COMPUTER: One minute to ship self-destruct.
DOCTOR: What have you done?
AUNTIE: I wanted to be certain that they would die.

PERI: On your feet, Bellip. We're going for a little run.
BELLIP: I'm not ready.
PERI: You have to be. Come on.
BELLIP: It's so big. So much space.
PERI: Just take it one step at a time. Come on, you can do it.
BELLIP: It's hard, so hard.
PERI: Just one step and then another. Close your eyes. Hold onto me and walk. Imagine you're in your room walking on your exerciser.
BELLIP: I like walking on my exerciser.
PERI: It's just like that, but we need to pick up the pace a little. Give yourself a proper workout.
BELLIP: What's that moving?
PERI: What? Oh, it's the wind. Just the wind.
BELLIP: It pushed me.
PERI: It's just air. Moving air. Don't panic.

(Transmat.)
ERIMEM: Vidler, are you okay?
VIDLER: I think so. Help me off with this rad suit, will you?
(Transmat.)
ERIMEM: Oh no.

COMPUTER: Self-destruct has been activated. Evacuate the ship. This is not a drill. Repeat, this is not a drill.
DOCTOR: We have to go.
AUNTIE: Has your friend got clear?
DOCTOR: I hope so.
AUNTIE: And Bellip?
DOCTOR: I don't know, but if we don't get out of here we'll never know. Come on.
(Tardis door opens.)
COMPUTER: Fifteen.
(Tardis door closes, Tardis dematerialises.)
COMPUTER: Fourteen, thirteen, twelve, eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven

PERI: Come on! We have to get to cover!
BELLIP: There's danger? I knew the outside was dangerous.
PERI: There's nothing out here to be scared of. It's the ship we just left that might kill us.
BELLIP: I don't understand.
PERI: If we don't get inside that dome, we'll go with it. Laroq, be ready with that door! Now!
(KaBoom, clang.)
LAROQ: What happened?
PERI: That explosion was your colony ship.
LAROQ: Our habitat cells.
PERI: Your prison cells, you mean. You don't need them any more. You're free now.
BELLIP: Free? Free for what?
PERI: Free to live your lives.
LAROQ: We don't know what that means.
PERI: I guess you'll just have to figure it out, then.

(KaBoom then a series of smaller explosions. Scanner off.)
AUNTIE: It's done.
DOCTOR: Perhaps. Let's hop back to the space station, collect Erimem, and survey the damage.
AUNTIE: At least I can have the satisfaction of knowing that Makra'Thon is dead.

DOCTOR: I hope that knowledge helps you sleep at night.

(Tardis materialises, Tardis door opens.)

AUNTIE: I've not been up here for years.

(Tardis door closes.)

DOCTOR: Welcome back. Erimem!

ERIMEM: Doctor, I

DOCTOR: I think we might have written off the General too soon.

GENERAL: Doctor, I told you that the end of the hunt was inevitable.

DOCTOR: Let Erimem and the boy go. Your quarrel is with me, not them.

GENERAL: My quarrel is with all of you. My crew has been wiped out by the savagery of you animals.

AUNTIE: You ate my colonists, and you call us animals?

GENERAL: You don't understand. That is not all we are. We have culture, art, civilisation. We build things, not just destroy them. We keep ourselves to ourselves, unlike you humans. Even in our isolated part of the galaxy we have heard of you and of your hypocrisy.

VIDLER: What are you talking about?

GENERAL: You humans, you spread through the universe, bringing your narrow-minded ideas of right and wrong, and claim moral high ground, and yet all the time you are no better than we Khellians. How many times in your history have you been responsible for death and destruction on a massive scale?

DOCTOR: You're right. Humans have done some questionable things. But that's no excuse to treat them like cattle.

GENERAL: I don't wish to argue. Destroying you is what I must do to protect the eggs.

VIDLER: Ah. You may be a little late for that.

GENERAL: The brood? What of them?

VIDLER: Oh, nothing much. Just that they're all dying from radiation poisoning.

GENERAL: No! You have guaranteed yourselves a terrible death.

DOCTOR: Are you all right, General? You seem a little wobbly on your feet. Still recovering from the thin air of the colony ship, are you?

GENERAL: Get back.

DOCTOR: You can't shoot all of us.

GENERAL: Can't I? Don't wriggle, girl.

ERIMEM: I'm not wriggling, I'm bracing to kick!

DOCTOR: Down, Erimem!

AUNTIE: Out of the way. Let me at him.

VIDLER: Erimem, over here.

GENERAL: Get off me, fool,

AUNTIE: No way. I owe this to the rest of my family, who you butchered!

DOCTOR: Auntie, no!

AUNTIE: Get back!

(Bang! Sloshing liquid.)

ERIMEM: What happened?

DOCTOR: Auntie must have been carrying a bomb of some sort.

AUNTIE: A low level detonator, actually. Useful for terraformers facing the task of excavating hard ground or vile alien stomachs.

VIDLER: Auntie, are you...

AUNTIE: Fine, but it would be nice if someone could help me get this disgusting creature's corpse off me.

VIDLER: Of course.

ERIMEM: Doctor, where's Peri?

DOCTOR: Down below, safe and well, I hope.

AUNTIE: As our survivors in the other domes. Perhaps now we should wake them.

DOCTOR: To go home?

AUNTIE: Maybe. Maybe not. You claim to be a scientist.

DOCTOR: I have some ability in that field, yes.

AUNTIE: Then perhaps you could help me use the Medusa's scanners to evaluate the terraforming project.

DOCTOR: Yes, I'd be happy to.

(The Tardis materialises.)

PERI: Oh, at last. I was beginning to worry.

(Tardis door opens.)

DOCTOR: Peri! Ah, there you are. You made it then.

PERI: Just about. Whose bright idea was it to blow the ship up?

AUNTIE: That was me, I'm afraid.

PERI: Thanks very much. You nearly took us with it.

ERIMEM: Well, I'm glad to see she didn't.
PERI: Erimem! Good to see you.
ERIMEM: It is good to see you too, Peri.
LAROQ: What happens now?
DOCTOR: Well, generally we like to make a quiet getaway and let people get on with it.
BELLIP: Get on with what? Everything we've ever known has gone.
VIDLER: Not quite everything.
LAROQ: Vidler!
VIDLER: Steady in there. Personal space and all that.
LAROQ: We have to get past all that.
BELLIP: It's a new beginning.
VIDLER: With just the four of us?
DOCTOR: Just four? I don't think so. Do you, Auntie?
AUNTIE: No, I don't. There are a dozen domes like this one, and plenty of colonists still in suspended animation. We'll revive them, and start working at making this colony work.
PERI: But the soil, the atmosphere. I thought this planet couldn't sustain life.
AUNTIE: It couldn't when we arrived, but a long-term terraforming project began the moment we landed. The soil has been enriched with nitrates, an ozone layer has been created, water levels have been improved.
DOCTOR: According to the monitors on Medusa, the terraforming changes have almost reached a certain critical mass. A corner has very nearly been turned. It won't be easy, but it will get easier from this point on. I think this colony does have a future.
BELLIP: But the Khellians?
DOCTOR: I'm afraid that I don't think that they do.
BELLIP: Are you sure you will not stay? The three of you, you can help us rebuild normal lives.
DOCTOR: I'm flattered, but I'm not really the organiser sort. I like a certain amount of disorder, to be totally honest. Anyway, you have Auntie to lead you.
AUNTIE: I don't think so. I've done enough of that, and made too many mistakes. It's time for someone new, someone younger. Some fresh blood.
BELLIP: But where will we find someone suitable?
DOCTOR: Well, I do know someone who has some experience of leadership. You might even say she was born to it.
ERIMEM: Me?
DOCTOR: Might you be up to the challenge?
ERIMEM: I'm sure I could, but I would rather carry on travelling with you.
DOCTOR: You would?
ERIMEM: Oh yes. There's still so much I want to see and learn.
DOCTOR: Splendid. I'm sorry, Auntie. You and your colonists are going to have to work this out yourselves. Perhaps together, between you.
VIDLER: Share the burden, you mean.
DOCTOR: Worth a go, isn't it?
PERI: I'm glad you're staying.
ERIMEM: I had to. You promised to show me a roller-coaster.
DOCTOR: Goodbye, then. And good luck.
(Tardis door closes, Tardis dematerialises.)

DOCTOR: Right then, where's next?
PERI: Earth!
ERIMEM: But first, Peri owes me a pedicure.
PERI: Yes, your Majesty.
ERIMEM: I'll be in my room.
DOCTOR: I think she's back to her old self, don't you?
PERI: Well on the road to recovery. And what about you? Any regrets?
DOCTOR: Too few to mention.
PERI: So, you're absolutely sure that you do want both of us around?
DOCTOR: Of course I do. You know, two's company, but three... Three's a crew.